

# **Joint Code of Conduct**

## **A Guide for Working Together**

### **For Panel Members, Tenant Associations and Royal Greenwich**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This Code of Conduct is the agreed way for tenants/residents, Councillors and council officers to work together in the formal tenant participation structure in Greenwich. Its aim is to build positive and constructive working relationships.

This booklet covers:

1. Joint Responsibilities
2. Taking Part in Meetings
3. Your Role as a Representative
4. The Council's Role
5. Declarations of Interest
6. Gifts
7. Confidentiality
8. Equal Opportunities
9. Breaches of the Code
10. Signing the Code

#### **1. OUR JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES**

Under this Code we agree to:

- ✓ Attend meetings regularly
- ✓ Contribute to ideas and discussions
- ✓ Treat each other with respect and tolerance even when there are issues of disagreement
- ✓ Take steps to ensure that tenant involvement is representative of the rich diversity of our community
- ✓ Respect & be aware of the different participation requirements of diverse communities
- ✓ Respect the agreed rules (the Constitutions, Code of Conduct, Compact, Equalities Policies etc)

#### **2. TAKING PART IN MEETINGS**

During meetings the Chair will:

- ✓ Be responsible for ensuring that all members get a fair opportunity to contribute
- ✓ Have discretion to ask speakers to bring their contribution to an end
- ✓ Ensure that the agreed rules are kept to

Offensive or disruptive behaviour, discrimination or prejudice will not be accepted at any time.

## **During meetings all participants will:**

- ✓ Request their slot to speak via the Chair
- ✓ Follow the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meeting
- ✓ Be courteous to each other
- ✓ Allow each other the opportunity to speak
- ✓ Respect each other's views
- ✓ Refrain from making personal remarks and comments
- ✓ Keep language and tone of voice moderate at all times (avoid shouting or speaking in an aggressive tone which could be considered to be intimidating or bullying)
- ✓ Follow the Agenda
- ✓ Remember the purpose of the meeting
- ✓ Refrain from using the meeting to resolve issues of a personal nature
- ✓ Work in partnership with residents and the Council to achieve the best possible results
- ✓ Operate within the rules of the Constitution

## **3. YOUR ROLE AS A REPRESENTATIVE**

The role of tenant/resident reps is:

- ✓ To take an active part in Greenwich's formal participation structure
- ✓ To comment constructively on Council services and proposals
- ✓ To be responsible and accountable to the residents they represent
- ✓ Not to promote a particular party political line
- ✓ To gather and represent the diverse views of all sections of the community and request assistance where necessary
- ✓ To feed back the results of participation
- ✓ To be clear when they are acting as an individual resident and when they are acting as their Panel's or group's representative
- ✓ To be accountable to their Panel or group and not to act in the name of the group without the group's approval
- ✓ Not to expect favourable treatment e.g. repairs, allocation
- ✓ To use agreed procedures when taking up individual issues
- ✓ To actively participate in training, briefings and issues around Equal Opportunities

## **4. THE COUNCIL'S ROLE**

### **▪ Council Officers**

- ✓ Are accountable to the Council
- ✓ Give advice to representatives and councillors
- ✓ Carry out the Council's work under the direction and control of the Council and in accordance with policies and procedures
- ✓ Are bound by their contract of employment, Council standing orders and relevant legislation
- ✓ Must remain neutral politically
- ✓ Can only share information where to do so would not breach Data Protection legislation and sharing of information agreements

### **▪ Councillors**

- ✓ Elected Members at council meetings will normally belong to political parties
- ✓ They may seek to influence meetings in a particular direction in accordance with their politics. This is quite legitimate, as they have been elected based on their views.
- ✓ They also have to comply with Council rules and regulations e.g. the need to declare a personal interest in a particular issue.

## ▪ **The Council's Responsibilities are to:**

- ✓ Provide opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders to be involved in ways that most suit them
- ✓ Recognise that tenants' and leaseholders' efforts are voluntary and ensure that consideration is given to the demands on their time e.g. convenience of meetings etc
- ✓ Give prompt feedback to tenants and leaseholders on queries and concerns raised and be open about the process of decision making and the role which the tenants' and leaseholders' voice will have in specific instances
- ✓ Listen to and consider the views of tenant and leaseholder reps to enable them to make a difference
- ✓ To arrange meetings, take minutes and support tenant participation activities
- ✓ Take an active role in contributing ideas and opinions at meetings and to abide by decisions that have been properly made at meetings
- ✓ Provide information in accessible formats as outlined in the Tenant Compact including translations, large print, on tape, in Braille

## **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

- ✓ In the case of a private interest in any issue (e.g. family, business or financial), or an interest in a particular estate, block or road, residents
  - must seek the advice of a council officer
  - may be asked not to take part in the discussion and to abstain from voting
- ✓ If the Chair has a private interest, s/he should declare this to the meeting at the start and must not take part when that particular item is discussed unless invited to do so
- ✓ For representatives who are also members of a local political party organisation, it is important to distance these two roles to avoid confusion about motives and interests
- ✓ Councillors have detailed rules covering declarations of interest

## **6. GIFTS**

- ✓ Representatives should not accept gifts, favours or hospitality. The person or organisation concerned may be seeking something in return
- ✓ If necessary, seek advice from a council officer
- ✓ Councillors and Officers have separate codes covering gifts/hospitality

## **7. CONFIDENTIALITY**

- ✓ Members of panels may receive information that has not been made public and is still confidential
- ✓ Confidential information may only be used for the purpose of the meeting and must not be passed on to anyone who is not a member of the panel
- ✓ If you are not clear about whether information can be passed on please seek advice from a council officer

## **8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- ✓ All members of the panel must:
  - agree to abide by the Council's Equal Opportunities objectives
  - ensure that *"no individuals or groups in the Borough should be disadvantaged by reason of ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, class, income, employment status or religious belief"*.
- ✓ Expenses will be paid to tenants and leaseholders. For details see: *"A Guide to Claiming Expenses for Panel Members"*.
- ✓ Further standards on running meetings and providing information to tenants and leaseholders are set out in the Tenant Compact.

## **9. BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT**

- ✓ Anyone in breach of the code may be requested by the Chair to leave the meeting
- ✓ In the event of serious breaches, they may be excluded by the Chair from future meetings, subject to a vote by the Panel or group
- ✓ If the behaviour continues they may be required to give up their position as a panel representative (subject to a vote by the Panel or group)
- ✓ There will be a right of appeal to the Tenancy Operations Manager

## **10. SIGNING THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

*As a member of the group  
named below I agree to abide by the terms stipulated in the  
Code of Conduct.*

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Group** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

**Code of Conduct**

*As a member of the group named below we agree to abide by the terms stipulated in the Code of Conduct.*

Name of Group \_\_\_\_\_

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